

History Wanted

By Jim Rogers



Museums generally deal with the collection, maintenance, and public exhibit of physical objects, and the US Army Military Police Corps Regimental Museum at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, is no different. The museum is part of the US Army Center of Military History, headquartered at Fort McNair in Washington, DC. According to the fiscal year 2005 Army Historical Program, at the beginning of 2004 there were 57 Active Army museums nationwide. There are also two Active Army museums in Germany and one in Korea.

The US Army Military Police Museum has more than 3,000 items in its collection, representing most of the history of the Military Police Corps. However, there are gaps in the collection. While some single items may fill the museum's requirements for some historical periods, other time periods or operations lack any significant representation at all. This article will provide a general overview of the museum's artifact objectives, plus a listing of some specific items being sought to fill historical gaps.

The museum's main mission is to focus on the American military police soldier and military police branch history. Not all artifacts are publicly exhibited; the majority are kept in proper conservation storage to ensure their preservation for study and research by future generations of military police soldiers. Museum staff members carefully select appropriate artifacts from the collections for public exhibit to "interpret" aspects of the military police branch history. Fragile artifacts (usually paper, cloth, or leather) may be publicly exhibited for only limited times because of light levels and environmental conditions.

Generally, the museum seeks standard-issue gear, equipment, and uniforms from identifiable military police soldiers who were on various deployments, perhaps in association with a significant example of one of the Army values. There is no preference for items used by enlisted soldiers or officers. Gear, equipment, and uniforms showing normal wear and tear from actual use by a military police soldier on deployment provide a tremendous amount of intrinsic value or "provenance," which is a documented association with

a specific person or event. New "out-of-the-box" items that were never worn or used have little value as museum artifacts. Specialized equipment related to a unit or organizational mission is also recommended for the museum. Photographs or videos of military police soldiers on deployment would also be highly desirable. The museum does not need a great number of items, preferring to have a few pieces with a high degree of historical significance.

As museum staff members have reviewed the museum's current holdings and identified what is necessary for properly representative exhibits and soldier education, specific needs have come to light. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Military police-marked helmets and helmet liners from World War II.
- Unit-marked military police helmet liners from Vietnam.
- Unit-specific military police brassards from Vietnam.
- Equipment and uniforms associated with the Criminal Investigation Division.
- Specialized women's military police uniforms and equipment, especially the 1976 green pantsuit issued Armywide in November 1977.

Also sought are US Army military police uniforms and equipment with specific history from the following operations:

- Urgent Fury, Grenada (1983).
- Just Cause, Panama (1989-90).
- Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Southwest Asia (1990-91).

- Eastern Exit and Restore Hope, Somalia (1991-92).
- Uphold Democracy, Haiti (1994-95).
- Joint Endeavor and Joint Guardian, the Balkans (1995-96).

Collecting artifacts from current operations is now underway with units and individuals on or recently returned from deployments. I trust that this article has proved enlightening to the military police community about a major function of the museum and will spark ideas and recollections to help the museum obtain items it requires to properly reflect the history of the military police.

References:

US Army Center of Military History, Army Historical Program, Fiscal Year 2005, 6 December 2004.

US Army Center of Military History, Army Regulation 870-20, *Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art*, 11 January 1999.

Contact information:

US Army Military Police Corps Museum
Attn: ATSJ-SM
495 South Dakota Avenue (Building 1607)
Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473-8851

Commercial: (573) 596-0604,
DSN: 581-0604